

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 215

By McCord

A RESOLUTION to urge the United States Congress to provide adequate funding so that the historic structures of the Elkmont Historic District within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, can be adequately maintained and preserved.

WHEREAS, the Elkmont Historic District is located in the Little River Valley of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in East Tennessee and is comprised of four adjoining compounds of early-twentieth century cabins and public buildings; Elkmont contains two hotel buildings, a social clubhouse, and a number of cabins and outbuildings built between 1910 and 1940; and

WHEREAS, significant for its architecture and its role in helping form the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1937, Elkmont was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994; recognized for its early-twentieth century vernacular architecture and its recreational history, Elkmont is the only intact early-twentieth century resort remaining within the mountains of East Tennessee and was awarded National Park Service "Save America's Treasures" designation in the late 1990s; and

WHEREAS, political and business leaders in Tennessee were eager to have a national park established in East Tennessee after having seen two thirds of the mountains' timber cleared by the logging industry; the inhabitants of Elkmont, along with political leaders, worked tirelessly for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to protect an area that was world renowned for its diversity of plant and animal life and the integrity of its mountain landscape; and

WHEREAS, although Elkmont's collection of wood-frame cabins, the Wonderland Hotel and the Appalachian Clubhouse are not grand architectural masterpieces, they reflect the

simplicity of form and function in their modest design; Governor Austin Peay and Colonel W.B. Townsend were Elkmont property owners who labored successfully toward the park's formation; spearheading the effort was Colonel David C. Chapman, chair of the Tennessee Park Commission, whose advocacy for the park was so outspoken that he was awarded a cabin in Elkmont in 1939 by the Roosevelt Administration in acknowledgement of his effective leadership; and

WHEREAS, the dedicated and hard working staff at Great Smoky Mountains National Park is responsible for preserving not only a fragile ecosystem of rare plants and wildlife, but also historic artifacts of southern Appalachian culture lying within the park; the preservation and sensitive reuse of a critical mass of the buildings at Elkmont clearly falls within the park's mandate to protect scenic beauty, biodiversity and evidence of the continuum of human activity; and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service staff finds that the task of carrying out its mandates has in recent years been enormously complicated by chronic underfunding that impedes both maintenance programs and interpretive programming; this disturbing fact is understood by the membership of this General Assembly as well as by such concerned organizations as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Tennessee Preservation Trust, and Knox Heritage -- groups that speak for concerned citizens of not only Tennessee, but the nation; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the Tennessee General Assembly strongly urges the United States Congress and the President of the United States to provide adequate funding to permit the National Park Service staff at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to preserve a critical mass of structures contained in the Elkmont Historic District within the Little River Valley of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in a manner whereby its National Register designation is retained and in such fashion that the village and its environs may be used for interpretive programs and in other ways to educate future generations about the National Park.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this General Assembly express its intention that such funding not be redirected from other vital park programs and that the Congress consider adequate funding for maintenance and other issues for the entire National Park system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chief Clerk of the House is directed to transmit enrolled copies of this resolution to each member of the Tennessee Congressional Delegation, the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United States, the Speaker and Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and the President and Secretary of the United States Senate.